

Chesapeake Bay Bridge Reconstruction Advisory Group (BBRAG)

MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, January 8, 2025

Regular Meeting
OPEN SESSION
Tracy Schulz, Chair

Members in Attendance

David Arthur
Jack Broderick
Peter Bradley
Nicholas Deoudes
Lyn Farrow (virtual)
David Gable
Bruce Gartner
Pat Lynch (virtual)
Jim Moran
Tracy Schulz
Will Pines (Teri Soos)

Members Not in Attendance

John Foster
Donald Schloss

Staff in Attendance

Huriyyah Ahmad
Melissa Bogdan
Billy Clough
Amy Daniel
Brandan Gloriso
Richard Jaramillo
James Kittleman
Charles Kenny

Kim Millender
Mary O’Keeffe
Robert Rager
Tim Ryan
Brad Tanner
James Turner
Melissa Williams

Others in Attendance

Steve Cohoon, Queen Anne’s County
Lee R.

At 6:00p.m. Chair Tracy Schulz called the meeting of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Reconstruction Advisory Group (BBRAG) to order.

Approval – Minutes of October 2, 2024 Meeting

Chair Schulz asked if there were any amendments to the draft minutes of the October 2, 2024 meeting that were distributed to the members with one being put forward.

Member Bradley motioned to approve the minutes of the July 10 meeting with a second from Member Moran. The minutes were approved with a unanimous vote.

Report – Quarterly Group Activities and Recommendations

Chair Schulz stated that per House Bill 56, the BBRAG must report on the group's activities since the last meeting and provide any recommendations they have based on those activities.

Chair Schulz reminded BBRAG members to submit their quarterly activity report to Melissa Bogdan for tracking and use in next year's annual report.

Member Deoudes stated that he attended a Chamber of Commerce event in November where other attendees asked about details regarding the new Bay Crossing.

Member Schulz attended the Queen Anne's County Bay Crossing Study (BCS) meeting and thought it was well attended. He offered his commendations to the staff who put it all together.

Member Broderick echoed the commendation on the BCS meeting adding that the displays were of good quality. He added that staff answered lots of questions or helpfully explained the project's status. He stated that the question his community members continue to ask most often is if the new alignment will be within the US 50 corridor to which he responds in the affirmative. Member Broderick stated that he has shared BCS graphics with people he knows.

Member Moran also commended the BCS meeting efforts adding that Queen Anne's County TV (QATV) was also present at the meeting interviewing people. He added that people are happy with the direction things are going.

Member Gable stated that he also attended Queen Anne's County BCS meeting. He stated that he is looking forward to the next round of public meetings.

Member Bradley attended the Anne Arundel County BCS meeting and thought it was very well attended. He is also waiting for the next round of public meetings. He added that his community continues to share their concerns on US 50 ramp closures during the summer season.

Member Arthur shared the recent BCS videos with his community and encouraged people to attend the virtual meeting and view the boards. He stated that he will follow up with people and encourage them to submit comments before the comment closure date on January 13th.

Member Lynch stated that she attended the Anne Arundel County BCS meeting, adding her commendations on the meeting's staff. She stated that there are still concerns about the proposed Chesapeake National Recreation Area (CNRA) and she is staying up to date on the

status of the relevant bill in Congress which died with the previous session but is anticipated to return during the upcoming legislative session.

Report – MDTA & MDOT SHA Updates

MDTA Chief Engineer Jim Harkness provided an overview of ongoing projects at the Bay Bridge.

Member Douedes asked if there was a minimum temperature requirement for deck panel replacement? Mr. Harkness responded that there is no minimum temperature for panel placement, but that other work is dependent on temperature and weather and that can affect panel placement.

Member Deoudes stated that people continue to inquire about the joint panels on the bridge with Mr. Harkness responding that the team continues to work on addressing concerns adding that there are stringent requirements to be met regarding the concrete placement.

Member Schulz inquired about the location of the new building with Mr. Harkness responding that it will be located near where trailers are currently located.

Responding to a question from Member Bradley, Mr. Harkness stated that the prioritization plan for deck replacement had the panels in the worst condition being replaced first which is the present Phase 1 before proceeding with other phases. The suspension spans will be a dedicated phase of their own.

MDOT SHA Deputy Administrator/Chief Engineer of Operations Terri Soos stated that SHA will be requesting two meetings with Queen Anne's County. One will be to discuss MD 8 bicycle improvements to enhance existing bike/ped facilities with the intention of discussing options and implement temporary improvements in the spring that would be removed by end of the year and analyzed for potential permanent solutions. The meeting would involve staff from District 2 and the planning team.

The second meeting would be another town hall for ramp closures on the eastern shore and discussing what worked last summer and what could work this coming summer. The anticipation is that the program would be similar in 2025 to what it was in 2024 but SHA would like to receive public feedback nonetheless.

Member Bradley inquired why there were no ramp closures on Thursdays in 2024 with Ms. Soos responding that there is a need for balance. While the community desires Thursday closures, they do present challenges for local employers and their employees, and they require staff resources and costs that must be transferred from other responsibilities. Ms. Soos stated that SHA is finalizing plans and will share them at the April BBRAG meeting.

Report – Bay Crossing Tier 2 NEPA Study

MDTA Director of Planning and Program Development, Melissa Williams, provided an update for the Bay Crossing Tier 2 NEPA study, sharing some of the slides presented at the recent public meetings. She stated that during the virtual meeting, over 90 questions were answered

live. That meeting was recorded and can be found on BayCrossingStudy.com. In total 676 inquiries and comments were received across all three public meetings.

Ms. Williams indicated she heard several times from citizens and relayed through staff that the engineering was explained very well; overall there was a lot of support for a bridge. People asked about how the new bridge would impact local traffic; and people liked that bridge capacity would not be reduced during construction.

Member Gable inquired about the deciding factor in the final choice of crossing. Ms. Williams responded that the team will look at a lot of different but related factors, but ultimately the choice will be what alternative offers best overall performance.

Responding to a question from Member Bradley, Ms. Williams stated that a construction year has not yet been determined. She added that there is a need to decide how to move forward with construction, then to look at funding, then proceed to procurement, design, construction. She stated that if all steps proceed ideally, construction could start in 2032 but there are many important decisions that must precede the decision to start construction.

Responding to a question from Member Deoudes, Ms. Williams stated that the MDTA first selects its' preferred alternative. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) reviews this decision and the alternative and selects its' chosen alternative.

Member Gartner stated that lots of moving parts are involved in holding the public meetings adding that the MDTA appreciates the patience and comments from everyone.

Ms. Williams stated that although the public meetings were held later than originally intended, there was no impact to the overall project schedule. She added that although there is a window for people to submit comments from the public meetings, the team continues to collect public comments throughout the year. She stated that there is a need to compile comments from these meetings to analyze them and draw conclusions, but that BBRAG members should tell their communities to continue to submit comments as needed to the team.

Unfinished Business

Bay Bridge Run

Bay Bridge Administrator James Turner provided a recap of the run held on November 10, 2024. It was 9th time the run has taken place and there were 15,560 participants who completed the course: up from those in 2023. The bridge was reopened by noon, and normal traffic had resumed by 1pm with only a one-mile queue. The team is looking forward to holding the same event again in 2025.

New Business

Member Gable inquired about the sequencing of the lane use controls and whether it is necessary for one signal to show a yellow 'x' as on recent occasions, he could only see red signals on two occasions including Christmas Eve and had been told that that was not permissible. Mr. Jaramillo responded that there are requirements for the lane use control signal sequencing but

that the red signals gradually move backwards as the lane closure is implemented. Mr. Jaramillo stated that he would look into the closures on the dates Member Gable mentioned.

Member Moran requested that signage requiring motorists to move out of lanes with a red 'x' use control be erected. He added that Queen Anne's County is not pursuing legislation during the upcoming legislative session but would consider doing so next year if signage is not effective. Mr. Harkness stated that the MDTA is taking a two-step approach that will see existing 'obey lane use' signs with ones including the fine amount. The second step is to erect larger, overhead signs with the same message. There will be two signs in each direction with at least one of those being overhead. Inquiring about the amount of the fine for not obeying the lane use controls, Member Gable was informed that it is set by state law.

Public Comments

No comments were received.

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, April 2 2025, at 6:00p.m.

There being no further business, a motion to adjourn the meeting of the BBRAG was made by Member Moran at 7:14p.m.

ATTACHMENTS: Bay Crossing Study presentation slides